

Women and Heart Disease: Stress and Depression

Unmanaged stress and depression have can have a big impact on your life.

Chronic stress can lead to high blood pressure, increased emotions such as anger or irritability, and a weakened immune system.

Many of the ways people cope with stress, including overeating, drinking and smoking, can increase your risk of heart disease.

Depression is more common in women than men, and studies show that people with depression are more likely to develop heart disease than those who are not depressed.

The good news is that many of the small lifestyle changes you can make to lower your risk of heart disease can also help your stress and emotions. Start by looking at what causes your stress or depression and make some changes to reduce the amount of stress.

“I’ve worked as an ER nurse for several years, as a case manager for several years, and then back to shock trauma nursing. So, it was always high stress, long hours, crazy hours, crazy shifts, and they’ve always told me, “Kind of slow down, learn to slow down””

No one can totally avoid negative emotions like stress or depression in life.

When you are feeling stressed or depressed, take some time out for yourself. Find time each day to do the activities you enjoy.

This could be even 10 minutes of an activity or hobby that brings you joy or relaxation.

Relaxing hobbies can help you keep things in perspective and refocus on what’s important.

“For hobbies, I have a four-year-old son, so he keeps me busy all the time. I do a lot of outside things, lots of flower gardening and vegetable gardening in the summertime.”

Try reading, listening to music, deep breathing exercises or meditation.

It’s a good idea to know a few relaxation techniques.

Whichever relaxation technique you choose, try to make it a regular part of your day-to-day living.

If you find that you have made some lifestyle changes and still feel depressed, you may need professional help. There are a variety of treatment options for depression. Talk to your healthcare provider about one that can work for you.

Unmanaged stress and depression can have a direct impact on your life. And unhealthy coping with your emotions can increase your risk for heart disease.

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Don't ignore your emotions.

Take the steps you need to make lifestyle changes to reduce the stress and depression-in your life – for the good of your heart.